

Claim 9 (Currently amended): ~~The method according to claim 3, A method for the storage of an acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide, which, in a forced coloration test, the values, ΔL , Δa , Δb , are calculated in accordance with the following formulas:~~

$$\Delta L = [] \quad | \quad L1 - L2 [] \quad | \quad (\text{Absolute value})$$

$$\Delta a = [] \quad | \quad a1 - a2 [] \quad | \quad (\text{Absolute value})$$

$$\Delta b = [] \quad | \quad b1 - b2 [] \quad | \quad (\text{Absolute value})$$

wherein L1, a1, and b1 are respectively the values of L, a, and b of said acrylonitrile solution before undergoing said forced coloration test and L2, a2, and b2, are respectively the values of L, a, and b of said acrylonitrile solution after undergoing said forced coloration test and are respectively 5 or less, 5 or less and 10 or less, wherein a molecular oxygen concentration of the gaseous phase portion of said solution is adjusted to a level in the range of 0.01 to 10% by volume preparatorily to storing said solution [as held] in contact with a metal, wherein the acrylonitrile solution has a water content of not more than 0.3% by weight in the presence of at least one member selected from alkyl-substituted hydroxybenzenes, hindered phenols, phosphorous esters, phosphoric esters, and phosphoric acid amides.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, which comprises the steps of:

preparing ^{the} ~~a~~ maleimide mixture by adding the primary antioxidant and the secondary antioxidant ^{the} ~~to~~ maleimide in a molten state and, subsequently dissolving said maleimide containing mixture in acrylonitrile.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, comprising: adding a primary antioxidant and a secondary antioxidant to acrylonitrile and, dissolving molten maleimide therein.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): The method according to claim 3, 2 wherein a total amount of azobenzene and N,N-diphenyl hydrazine is not more than 500 ppm.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein the concentration of N-phenyl maleimide in acrylonitrile is between 40 to 90% by weight relative to that of the acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide.